THE ASIANADIAN

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4) To stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups
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We welcome submissions of critical essays, community articles, poetry, art work, short stories and reviews concerning the Asian experience in Canada, as well as letters to the editor. Manuscripts will only be returned if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. *The Asianadian* is abstracted in *Canadian Information Sharing Service* and *Newsletter* of the Cross Cultural Communication Centre. Bulk rates are available on request.

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editorial

The woman walked by
Men undressed her with their eyes
But did not see her

-d.m s.

For centuries Western culture has viewed Asian women through a distorted lens, creating two disparaging images: the vacuous, submissive, exotic sexual servant-- and the vacuous, submissive, virginal domestic servant. The efficacy of popular Western literature, films and television in keeping alive these stereotypes is evidenced by the fact that we, as Canadian women of Asian origin, still encounter flat preconceptions of ourselves in everyday interactions with non-Asian Canadians.

In this issue of *The Asianadian* we are beginning the essential process of demystifying ourselves, not only by questioning our mythical media images and hidden *her*stories, but also by giving expression to our creative talents and voicing common concerns, aspirations and frustrations-- the thoughts and feelings which have remained silent for too long.

Before we can expect to raise the consciousness levels of other Canadians *vis-à-vis* Asianadian women, we must first heighten our own awareness of our selves and erase any traces of the geisha girl mentality. We have to begin to challenge the sexist division of labour, the political distribution of personality traits -- and our 'place' in this male-centred society. We have to examine the various ways in which the rigid cultural traditions of our ancestors continue to stultify and subjugate us.

In order to fully understand our particular struggle as Asianadian women, it is also necessary to recognize the fact that our history, culture, social spheres and psyches are markedly different from those of Asianadian men. The oppression and exploitation which we suffer is much more intimate. It is a combination of the personal and the political, arising not only out of racism and capitalism, but ultimately out of sexist ideologies deeply rooted in all Asian cultures. Thus, our struggle to assert our rights and identities as Asianadians is complicated by an added dimension of ignorance amongst our allies i.e. Asianadian men. (A fairly valid analogy can be drawn here between our situation and that of Black women in the American Civil Rights Movement. Like us, these women were made to feel doubly inferior, since they too were expected to defer to the 'male ego', subordinating their special needs and concerns as women.)

It is horrifying to realize that a Confucian ethic in terms of the role of women still exists in Canada. A surprising number of Asianadian women practise self-denial, deriving their personal identities and feelings of self-worth primarily from their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. There are still many women among us who would not consider a career as a viable option, for they have been indoctrinated from birth to believe that keeping a man happy, by taking care of his children, house-- and penis, is their chief vocation in life.

It must be acknowledged that in some families women actually exercise much more power than their husbands. Yet, tradition dictates that they allow 'other people' to think that the husband is in control. In any case, for a great number of women in the Asianadian community, the narrow definition of 'womanhood' is so deeply entrenched that any woman who violates the norm by challenging a man intellectually, or in the work place--or who manifests lesbian tendencies--or who even demands to have heterosexual desires fulfilled, is automatically labelled "aggressive". She is therefore "masculine" and "unfeminine". A lot of us have assiduously begun to defy the sex role system, but generally speaking, Asianadian women are still at the awakening stage.

Faced with the complex relationships between sex, socio-economic class and race, how do we as Asianadian women fit into the North American feminist movement? The development of this seemingly amorphous movement has shown us that the common oppression of women has different ramifications in different racial and social classes. Certain divisions have emerged along economic and political lines, giving rise to distinct factions: radical feminists, socialist feminists, liberal bourgeois feminists, etc. As Asianadians, is it necessary to add to the divisiveness by separating ourselves from other women? Or is it possible to work out our unique problems within existing groups?

We must concede that the complex differences between feminist groups are very real and should be respected. And we should never ignore the fact that our experience as Asianadians sets us apart, not only from non-Asianadian women, but from each other as well. Cultural upbringing, political leanings, degree of assimilation and level of feminist consciousness may vary dramatically from one Asianadian woman to the next. (For example, in this issue of *The Asianadian*, a spectrum of feminist tones is represented by: Shizuye Takashima, Cassandra Kobayashi, Dawn Ono, and two East Indian women.) However, while recognizing the distinctions and maintaining our Asianadian identities, it is also important to strengthen our links with women all over the world by finding a fundamental ground upon which we can work together as sisters, transcending economic, political and racial lines in a common struggle for independence and dignity.

The next question facing us is that of trying to define the enemy. As I view the problem, it is too easy to label *all* men as the evil oppressors. Not *all* men are (excuse the cliché) *male chauvinist pigs*. There are several sensitive, enlightened men who actually support us in our struggle. Such men vehemently reject the *Playboy* world, for they too are in a state of powerlessness and are equally hurt by the prevailing sexist conservatism.

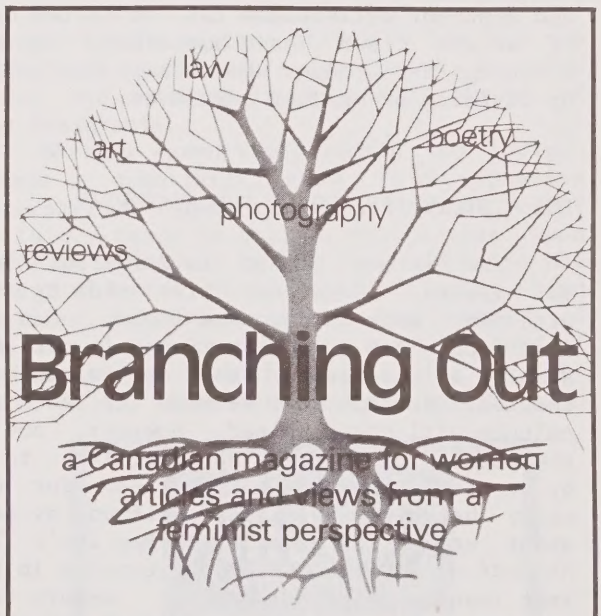
Placing the onus entirely upon the capitalist system would also be an incomplete explanation. Eliminating capitalism will not guarantee an immediate, magical change in the way men and women treat each other in their personal lives. Capitalism and sexism are inexorably bound, but it has to be admitted that men who espouse Marxist-feminist doctrine are not always immune to the disease of male chauvinist piggery. The condition of women has to improve *now* --not at some nebulous point *after* the revolution!! As long as the idea of women as personal property lingers in the minds of men, the personal oppression will continue, despite any sort of institutionalized, or legislated equality. And as long as women continue to distrust each other, viewing each other as potential rivals in the pursuit of ideal physical beauty and attention from males, true sisterhood will never be achieved.

The enemy to be eradicated then is the sexist system upon which our society is based-- the system which equates aggressiveness with manhood-- and passivity (i.e. pathological passivity) with womanhood. The sexist system is the evil which keeps us alienated from our selves, encouraging us to believe that we have no worthwhile existence, except in the eyes of men.

Almost three decades after the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, women are still considered 'the second sex'. And the specific issues are more or less the same: raising the status of homemakers; an end to job segregation; abortion on demand; human rights for lesbians; legalization of prostitution; equal pay for work of equal value; an end to media exploitation; and the recognition of rape as a violent crime of sexism, not sex. Because our situation has not really changed, there is an urgent need for us to become more cohesive-- to stand up against the social forces which seek to divide us. As Asianadian women, we must analyze the roots of our own oppression and establish channels of communication with one another. We will have to decide where we stand on the issues which directly affect our daily lives--and futures.

Human liberation is still a long way away, but hopefully, it will one day come to all of us. If both men and women can begin to regard each other as human beings and allow themselves to break out of constricting roles, we might all experience a wonderful new range of emotions and activities. Self-actualization may seem to be an absurdly naïve dream left over from the sixties, but it is indeed a dream worth pursuing.

- MOMOYE SUGIMAN



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SEXUAL SLAVERY IN CANADA: Our Herstory

by Cassandra Kobayashi

This story is about women who came to the New World, the women who are our mothers. I have written primarily about the Japanese because of limitations of time and energy. I hope others will share their stories about women from other motherlands. As sisters in a world that perceives us all as 'Orientals', we face common prejudices. By talking about our situation, the real and apparent differences can be sorted out. If we are clear about ourselves, we can unite against those who seek to confuse us by dividing us against ourselves.

THE HISTORY DEPENDS ON THE HISTORIAN

The history of men is different from our history. Women may live side by side with men, work in the same fields, eat the same food, but our experience is not the same. By discussing what our foremothers endured, perhaps what we mean by roots and culture will become clear. However, due to the paucity of written material left to us by our foremothers, we must look for our story between the lines written by men, about men. For example, in Roy Ito's *The Arrival of Mankichi Omura*, excerpted in the last issue of *The Asianadian*, we are told how our hero arrives in British Columbia, works in a lumber mill, then fishes and after serving Canada in World War I, 'settles down' in Port Essington at age 28. But "Mankichi needed a wife. He did not have the money to go back to Japan himself, so he asked his parents to find him a bride."[1]

HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD WIFE

Because arranged marriages were the norm in Japan and most of the Western world before this century, it is not extraordinary that Mankichi's wife was chosen for him. According to Ito, she was selected from "a good, hard-working family". Also of importance was being of the same *ken* (locality) and socio-economic background[2] and possessing domestic talents, good health and the ability to produce sons. A wife was a means of providing the support and maintenance -- activities necessary to hold the family together, to make it into a viable economic unit. "Mankichi *needed* a wife" (my emphasis) means that he desired the services of a woman *qua* domestic servant/mother of his children/sexual outlet. He bought her a sewing machine, the better to perform her duties.

Such a concept of the female role is not merely pragmatic for the harsh life in a frontier culture. In traditional Japan the wife's role was essentially the same as it is today, almost universally.[3] Women pour their energies into husband and family while he goes into the world and makes history.

LIFE AS A PICTURE BRIDE

The term 'picture bride' includes women whose pictures were published in a catalogue from which men ordered a wife, and those women whose only contact with their husbands prior to marriage consisted of an exchange of photographs. This impersonal system was considered 'immoral' by Americans, who required the couples to go

through another ceremony in the United States, often on the docks where the women disembarked.[4] The ocean voyage which marked the beginning of her married life was shared with other picture brides, all going third class but with plenty of food and an opportunity to hear, sometimes for the first time, the details of their wifely duties. In Hawaii they may have stopped for physical examinations, delousing baths and fumigation.[5]

On arrival the men and women looked for the person in their photographs. From both sides the photo may not have told the entire truth. Apparently, some of the women hid 'defects' such as moles behind fans in their pictures, and men had their pictures retouched to make them look younger. Nevertheless, most of the marriages persevered, although last-minute swaps and refusals occasionally occurred. Divorce was not unheard of, but difficult unless the woman had another man. Unlike the American belief that marriage was based on love, the Japanese marriage was clearly one of duty and obligation. In both systems women were forced into marriage as the only option for a respectable woman. Social and economic realities make indentification with a male the validation a woman's being.

These loveless couplings were not without effect on the children. In the extended Japanese family the grandparents' role was usually to "develop the child's emotional expressiveness",[6] as against the strict disciplinarian and accomplishment oriented parents. The effect of an entire generation growing up without grandparents means the *Nisei* missed an important part of their socialization. What spill-over effect has occurred in the *Sansei* and *Yonsei?*

MULTIPLYING LIKE RABBITS

The influx of breeding stock from 1908 on facilitated the stabilization of the Japanese community into families. The dramatic rise in the birth rate was jumped upon by 'White Canada' advocates as yet another indication of the 'peaceful penetration' by the 'yellow peril'. *Look at their power of fecundity* , they said. *They are multiplying at four times the rate of everyone else. This animalism is further proof of their immorality and inassimilability.* [7]

Today similar arguments are given as reasons to promote birth control for third world women, and closer to home, for women on public assistance, native women and other non-white women. It is assumed that these women don't seem to have learned the virtues of higher education. After all, the Japanese have proved that having all one's civil rights, human dignity and property stripped away is not an insurmountable difficulty if one really wants to succeed.

ALWAYS A JAP IN THE GAME OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Just because we are not overt targets of racist attacks today should not make us complacent. Our security depends, to a great extent, upon Canada's relations with Japan. Because Canada was friendly with Japan during the early years of immigration (i.e. it was economically advantageous to maintain relations) and because the Japanese government was highly interested in the welfare of Japanese wherever they were,[8] Japanese were not included in the ban on immigration by "unassimilable" groups. Unlike the Chinese immigrants who had to pay a $500 head tax from 1883 to 1923, Japanese entered Canada under the free entry clause of the Anglo-Japanese trade treaty. However, beginning in 1908 'gentlemen's agreements', by which Japan promised to limit immigration were as effective as any outright ban. Until 1928, the controlled maximum did not include wives and picture brides, but following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 and the end of the picture brides in the U.S. in 1921, the 'gentlemen's agreement' included wives and children in the annual quota of 150 immigrants.

Whether women and children are included was a negotiating point in an expensive international game of wits. Yet as recent as 1976, there is still a notion that Japan takes an interest in the lives of those who have left her. On his tour of Japan, Prime Minister Trudeau described the success of the *Nisei* despite Canada's sordid record of repression and then thanked "Japan, on behalf of all Canadians for the contribution

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made to Canada by the men and women of Japanese origin who have shown through their courage, tenacity, their industry, and their skills what gifted Canadians they are."[9]

Not all Canadians share Trudeau's apparent gratitude. Many believe we should be 'shipped back where we came from'. While we may perceive ourselves as Canadians, others still consider us Japanese. Such individuals would not openly advocate repatriation. By praising the Japanese Canadians, they can somehow ease their consciences sufficiently to justify repressive measures against other groups. (*note:* Immigration Act, 1978)

Similarly, when women's accomplishments in certain fields are recognized, the implication is that anyone can make it if she wants. This is simply a lie. This society runs on the unpaid, unrecognized labour of women. While individually we may be lucky enough to escape the gilded cage, for most women, motherhood and wifely duties are all we are expected to engage in, aside from the 'oldest profession' in the world: prostitution.

SELLING OUR SERVICES

Women's usefulness as a sexual object for men underlies both prostitution and marriage. Engels remarked that the wife 'differs from the ordinary courtesan only in that she does not hire out her body like a wageworker, on piecework, but sells it into slavery, once and for all."[10]

There has always been a notion that male humans have an absolute need for sexual intercourse. Therefore, one of the basic functions of the family is having the wife provide approved sexual outlets. In the *Issei* era before the arrival of picture brides, prostitutes provided the *requisite* sexual outlet for the population of young single men.[11]

Women were interchangeable. Even between the prostitute and wife there was substitutability. However, in order to maintain monogamy, wives and prostitutes were artificially distinguished-- good girls vs. bad girls. Thus, on the American mainland, prostitution by Japanese women was suppressed by requiring the Consul General of Japan in San Francisco to approve the application of men requesting an imported woman for a wife. If he was among the 10- 30% who did not meet the financial and moral standards, he would likely remain womanless because California law prohibited whites from marrying 'mongolians'.[12]

The relationship between sexism and racism has been discussed extensively with respect to the American Black Movement. The hierarchy of male over female, and white over black sets up tensions that are often expressed in sexual terms--lynching including castration, Black Power machismo, the Black sex kitten and Black Womb of Africa. While the rape metaphor is applied to white/Black relations, 'peaceful penetration' is the term used to describe how the Japanese operate.

In all cases, white men speak of 'protecting white womanhood' from the male animals of other races.[13] Saskatchewan in 1912 and British Columbia in 1914 passed legislation to prevent white women from working for Asians.[14] Women of 'other races' were thus

not worthy of protecting. Japanese women were said to be "so subservient that they easily become prostitutes," and "many a Japanese is supposed to make his living by the prostitution of his wife."[15] The pimp who lives off the avails of prostitution is universal, but charges that Japanese (or currently Blacks) are *naturally* prone to such behaviour is a red herring. As Simone de Beauvoir said, there is no fatal hereditary factor, no psychological defect. "The truth is that in a world where misery and unemployment prevail, there will be people to enter any profession that is open."[16] It is not the woman who is to be condemned, but the society where prostitution is the "least repellent option."[17]

SAN FRANCISCO SISTERS

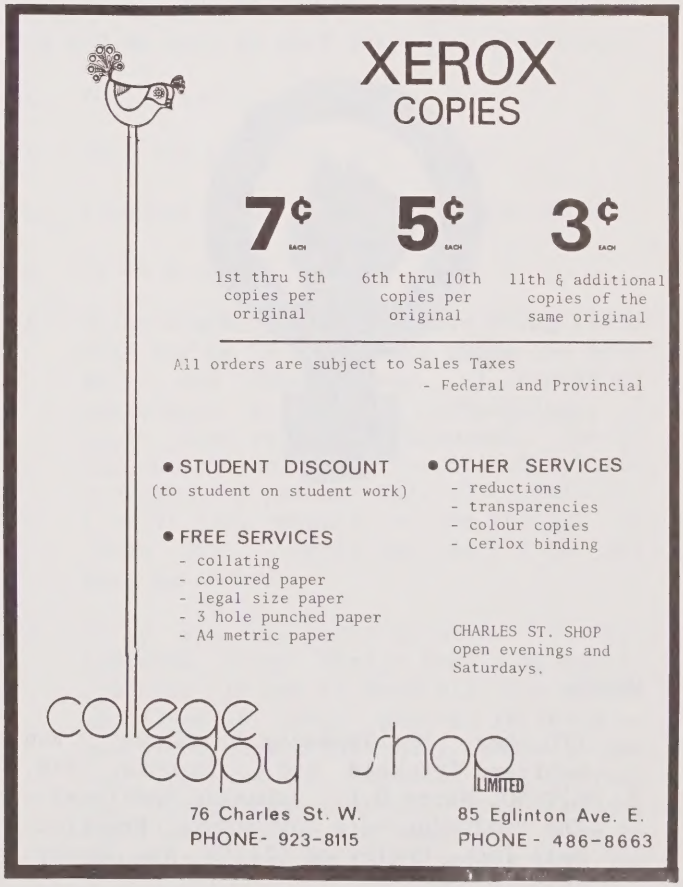
The centre for the Asian women market was San Francisco. Chinese women worked in parlors or cribs. The parlors were high class brothels, but the cribs were back alley operations where up to six women worked in slatted crates about 12' x 14', furnished with a curtain, a pallet, washbasin, a couple of chairs and a mirror. A woman who 'pledged' her body to a crib operation had a life expectancy of six to eight years after she started. After six to eight years of sexual slavery she was debilitated by disease, beatings and starvation and allowed to 'escape' to die at the Salvation Army, or at a 'hospital'.[18]

The open sale of Chinese women in San Francisco was reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "The particularly fine portions of the cargo, the fresh and pretty females who came from the interior are used to fill special orders from wealthy merchants and prosperous tradesmen..."[19] The women were stripped and paraded on to a platform where prospective buyers could inspect them and bid. Sale prices ranged from $500- $1,000, but after immigration was curtailed, prices rose up to $2,500. Mere infants were for sale, but fetched a lower price, as the owner would not get useful services for some time. These slaves were sold initially by their parents (or abducted) and traded as a commodity in the starkest example of women's function in the colonization of the North American continent.

The slave girl differed only in degree from the picture bride. Although the accoutrement and title differ, our foremothers were brought here to serve the needs of men -- either as a temporary sexual channel, or to produce sons. While the San Francisco decadence may have been more developed than anything in Canada, it is not because Canadians are any less culpable. The exploitation of women knows no national boundaries.

HERE AND NOW

Canadian culture is said to be multiethnic, a *mosaic* as opposed to the American *melting pot*. Indeed, we find individual groups celebrating their holidays on the streets or in community centres. Grand cultural expositions are held (e.g. Toronto's *Caravan*), during which visitors can experience the food, drink, dance and crafts of other cultures. However, these types of activities are merely the visible tip of the iceberg. Culture and ethnicity involve much more than putting on traditional costumes. The social structures and customs which govern individual behaviour underlie and give purpose to the trimmings. It is where my personal expectations intersect with the cultural expectations, be they Japanese Canadian or mainstream Canadian, that I begin to question the value of maintaining my cultural inheritance.



I realize there are positive elements I forsake by refusing to actively participate in my ethnic community. But due to the fact that the population of Japanese Canadians is relatively small and dispersed, finding sympathy and support has been difficult for me. Thus, for the most part, I have directed my energies into the women's movement at large. Sometimes this decision meets with criticism because the movement is perceived to be a white, middle-class phenomenon.

Last summer, for example, I suggested to the planners of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Youth Conference that a seminar be offered on women, in the belief that we as women must cope with greater and more insidious prejudice than Japanese Canadian men are forced to confront. Unfortunately, the conference organizers felt I was attempting to split the community before it had even become united; and so they refused to schedule the seminar.[20] This reaction-- instructions to sublimate your women's issues to the greater good (surprisingly often coincidental with male good)--has been the experience of Black women, of Native women, and women in trade unions and political parties. Women's Liberation will someday have its turn, they say. I say, look at what my foremothers had to suffer. Our roots may be in bondage, but our future is our own.

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2. KITANO, Harry H.L., *Japanese Americans--the Evolution of a Subculture*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1976, p. 39.
3. LA VIOLETTE, Forrest E., *Americans of Japanese Ancestry*, The Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Toronto, 1945, p. 17.
4. ADACHI, Ken, *The Enemy That Never Was*, McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Toronto, 1976, p. 91.
5. KITANO, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 3, p. 40.
6. KIEFER, Christie W., *Changing Cultures, Changing Lives, An Ethnographic Study of Three Generations of Japanese Americans*. Jossey- Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1974, p. 119.
7. ADACHI, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 4, p. 154.
8. Until 1916 a child born to Japanese parents whether in Japan or not, was a Japanese citizen. ADACHI, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 4, p. 175.
9. Press release from the Office of the Prime Minister at the dinner in honour of P.M. Miki, Tokyo, October 25, 1976.
10. ENGELS, Frederich, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 79.
11. KITANO, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 3, p. 46. This passage refers to Hawaii where prostitution and gambling were part of a highly evolved subculture.
12. GULICK, Sidney L., *The American Japanese Problem*, Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1914, p. 93.
13. Vancouver taxi drivers urged white patronage of white taxis because they "aim especially to give protection and courtesy to white women". ADACHI, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 4, p. 140.
14. Statutes of Saskatchewan 1912, c. 17; Statutes of British Columbia, 1923 c 76.
15. GULICK, *op. cit.*, *supra* n. 18, p. 15.
16. DE BEAUVOIR, Simone, *The Second Sex*, Bantam Books, New York 1970, p. 524.
17. *Ibid.*
18. LONGSTREET, Stephen, *The Wilder Shore*, Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1968, pp. 163-167.
19. *Ibid*, p. 160. *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 1869.
20. An informal, impromptu women's seminar took place at the conference, regardless of the organizers' objections. It was attended by women from across the country of all ages and backgrounds.

The complete bibliography for the article above may be obtained by writing to The Asianadian. [Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope].

Cassandra Kobayashi is a Toronto feminist and motorcyclist.

FROM CHAPATHIES TO HAMBURGERS

The following is part of a private conversation which took place recently between two women from Delhi, India. Because of the deeply personal nature of their discussion, these women wish to remain anonymous. We are very grateful to them for offering to share their feelings and experiences with us in this special issue of The Asianadian.

L. and A. are in their thirties. Both are of the Brahmin caste and hold Masters degrees in the social sciences from an Indian university. L. is married and has two sons under seven. She has been in Canada for six years and is now a Canadian citizen. Her husband has just bought a house. She has never worked outside her home in Canada. She generally comes across as a traditional Indian woman. A. is divorced. She has two teenaged daughters and a seven year old son. Five years ago she left her husband and began working to support herself and her children. She has lived in Canada for about ten years and remains a landed immigrant. Her life style would be considered unconventional by the more charitable members of her community.

LEAVING INDIA

A. Why did you leave India?

L. I got married to him. (laugh)

A. Same. I got married! (both laugh, not merrily) It wasn't until *after* the marriage that I found out we were going to leave India. He wanted to spring this surprise on me, you see. It left me disoriented... as if I were being snatched off suddenly... off the ground.

L. If I hadn't married him... I wouldn't have come. Not of my own choice. He used to write to me from Canada: "You have never been to the West. Until you come here, you won't know what life here is like."

A. What would your life have been like, if you had stayed in India? Did you have any ideas, any dreams of... after university?

(The following segment is carried on in very low, fragmented whispers. Neither is really paying heed to what the other is saying.)

L. Yes, I had a lot of them... .

A. What did you think of? For me... .

L. I wanted to be a... to tell the truth...

A. To be a what?

L. To be somebody. When I was doing field work for my Ph.D., I was drawn to folk music and dance forms. I wanted to contribute to Indian anthropology. I don't know still what happened, how it happened. The whole course of my life changed. I am not able to explain it. I still feel despair at the thought of those days. Empty and sad. I do not have an answer.

A. It is the same story as mine. I felt isolated in my family and in my caste. I wanted to get to know all the others who lived in other places in India -- and lived very differently. Those glimpses you had at Republic Day parades, those caste groups you *studied*, the hill people, the women who came to clean the outhouse... I felt a very in-

complete Indian. I don't know what happened either. Let's go on to other things.

LIVING IN CANADA

L. When I look back, I think we were much happier when there were not... so many rooms! No separate rooms and things like that... keeping to oneself... talking to others only at their convenience or at your convenience... . There was a different pleasure in the way we lived.

A. I must admit that I have grown to like my own space. We had this really small flat in Delhi and seven of us and an uncle and various relatives on their way to the holy places in the north ... I had no time and space for myself.

L. I used to have time for myself when going to school, coming back. I used to walk home s-l-o-w-l-y, thinking my own thoughts. Here everybody is so..... One is left all alone...

A. It is difficult for me to consider living by myself-- not in apartments with closed doors. Last week for instance, I was feeling awful about not getting a job. I remember that I relied on the Peruvian woman who lives with us--relied on her presence-- just coming into the kitchen to make some tea.

L. This is what I said-- privacy, interference, the concepts they have here... There are times when you need people.... Our own people change so much when they come here.

P/M

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A. I don't think they change so much. I think that this feeling you have now... that others may have changed and may not respond to you in the same way stops you from initiating anything. The same thought is probably on their minds also ... so that nothing happens when two Indians pass each other on the streets.

L. When I telephone people and ask: "Shall I come and visit you?", it is because I'm lonely. I *want to* see them--just to *feel* like a human being again-- that you are also *there*. Here you need it more ... to sort things out for yourself.... to straighten yourself... or else you will crack up. Like a lot of people here do. In India, we don't feel that way.

A. ...why?...

L. Because your relatives are there..., brothers, sisters, parents, cousins., aunts, uncles. They are all there.

A. If one relationship doesn't work out, there are a whole lot of other relationships where...

L. There are things in Canada I can'tadjust to. I was brought up very 'Westernized'... a lot of freedom, independence... in what I wanted to do, what I wanted to study. In spite of this... I find it very difficult.

A. My family too did not pay much heed to traditional ways of behaviour. I had a kind of intellectual freedom, but in fact, the society around me was such... structured in such a way that...

L. Yes, the society is there, all around you...

A. But I found that once I came here I was able to see choices, pick and choose values and a way of life... I was anonymous here and could experiment without fear of ridicule and reprisal. Yes, my situation changed, but not as a result of some ordinance passed in Heaven-- the change came because I *chose* that path and took the necessary steps... Do you do anything for yourself-- just for your pleasure and peace?

L. Sometimes I write a letter. I don't have pleasure in shopping.

A. I handle strange fruits, vegetables, grains and nuts in Kensington Market.

Reminds me of the Indian market, early in the morning. A favourite park alone. A visit to old Mrs. C., talking about her life before and after partition in India. The solid, little bulk of soft-eyed Mika... the smell of Frieda cooking in the kitchen. Do you enjoy cooking?

L. Rarely.

A. I know you to be a good cook.

L. Practice! I cook a full meal everyday. Chapathies, two subzies, a dhal, a raita, rice.

A. All the time I was married, I cooked a south Indian variation on the sambhar theme. Every day-- a sambhar, rasam, kari, kuttu, rice appalam--the monotony of it! I could not try other things. To him, this meal symbolized my care and concern. I have the luxury now of cooking to please myself. But, I approach the preparation of a full Indian meal with very ambivalent feelings, indeed!

CHILDREN AND THE FUTURE

A. Did you know that you were going to live here almost like forever? Make commitments?

L. Once I got married I knew. We went back once, but things didn't work out. Now I am not going back anymore. Now it's for good. He had a very good job just before he left India-- a good position, good salary, but he couldn't get a similar job. We tried business but it did not work out.

A. I too went back after my fifth year in Canada, midway through my marriage. It was obvious to everyone in my family that I was not only leaving Canada, I was leaving my husband. I was treated like a tourist, taken places. It was like an elaborate charade. I was struck dumb. I too played my role in the ritual and left. India has this quality... for me anyway, of gently keeping one in line, in the comfort of a known rhythm ... I went again a few years ago-- a divorced woman. This time I approached the vast country, not just my family. You know how it is in India, an *apaswara* (*a note off key*) is not only musically inept but something ritually impure. But I saw impurities unseen...pockets of wealth and the very poor, the faceless Brahmin widows... I will be back.

L. I do not hope for the day the children will go to settle in India. No. We are still living in the Indian way here, so if they return it will not be all that different for them. But when we made the choice of coming to Canada, I had no right to expect my children to go back. They are a part of this society and will grow up Canadian.

A. I am comfortable telling my children that they have two heritages, and that they may *choose* where they want to live, for a time, for all time. When I look at them, I see Indian children. There is the fact that they are growing up in Canada. I think this happens a lot in the case of visible immigrants. I must be careful here, though. After all, some of the East Indians in Canada were born here, some have come from England, the U.S., the West Indies, Guiana, Africa... .

L. When we speak of visible immigrants, we are talking about the racial thing... hm? Now when I tell my children that they are Canadians when the feeling grows in them that they are Canadian, they are going to *fight for it*. But if I keep telling them they can go back, they will try to escape. Now I want them to feel that they are part of this country, that they have rights. For instance, one of my sons came home one day from school and said somebody called him a '*Paki*'. I said to him: "First, go and tell that child that you do not come from Pakistan. You come from India. Secondly, that you are a Canadian just as much as he is. Tell him that except for the native peoples of Canada, all came as immigrants to this country. It may be parents, grandparents, great, great grandparents... We have all come originally from outside Canada, but we have become Canadians now. Ask this boy where his parents came from."

I gave my sons sweets for Diwali. (ed. note: major Hindu festival of light celebrated in November) I told them to share the sweets with other children and say it is for Diwali. There are *others* also who have their own culture. It is not Christmas all the time, all over the world! But what happens when Indians... hm? They bring a Christmas tree (*voice heavy with sarcasm*) into their homes and buy *Christmas* gifts and open them on the 24th night of December? And their children ask: "What is *Diwali* Mummy?" Isn't that a shame?

A. I didn't have a strong, religious upbringing in terms of ritual, and I cannot develop that way of life here to impress Canadians or to exhibit Indian 'culture'. I have a hard enough time living a life that makes sense to me, much less am I inclined to arrange my life for Canadian enlightenment. I celebrate Christmas *and* Diwali with trees and lights...My children will have an image of India even if I do not exhibit one picture of Shiva in my house. An attachment to the land I have, the concept of reincarnation, the complexity and beauty of Karnatic music, the absorbing convolutions of mythological Indian stories... a passion for vegetables like shallots and okra, the idea of pollution and purity and ritual distance, the fact of poverty and sheer numbers--all dug out from various levels of my consciousness-- all that is India! Not a selected pickled and preserved image to serve to others! And my children have to experience India throughout their growing years, not at Toronto Harbourfront festivals, but at their grandparents' house, in the streets of Delhi and Madras! Anytime my savings reach $600, I want to send one of them to India for two summer months--and I have done this. I will never save enough money to buy a house!

L. ... My younger son was talking the other day about God. He said brown is not a nice colour. I said "brown is a beautiful colour. Krishnaji is brown; Ramchandraji is brown". He said: "What about their God?" I said: "No, their god too is brown. He doesn't come from Canada or America. Christ comes from the East, from Egypt."

A. I have not discussed colour much with my children. I recall my son telling me that he wished he was not brown. I remember spontaneously breaking out: "But I am brown! Your father is brown! You like me, feel close to me and I am dark-haired, brown-skinned, with a *bindhi* on my forehead. That's me. You are brown-skinned, sparkly eyed, always whistling my son." Then, at various times, we have talked of various browns--honey, chapathies, clay-- all the goodness of brown colour. Then my son asked of me, "What of shit?" I said that I would worry if it turned white!

L. If you live in Canada and your colour is brown and you eat chapathies, there is nothing wrong with it. This is a way of life too. And a lot of people *better* accept it because we are part of this place. We are not something, that is there when they want it and when they don't want, they push us out. Yet, we have a choice if we want to go back. The hamburger is no better than the Indian food we eat!

A. You and your family have made up your minds about staying here. Going back is still an option for me.

L. I used to feel like that. I was unhappy here all the time...

A. No, it's not because I'm unhappy here. There has been a flowering of me here, a developing of self in and out of marriage, child bearing and mothering, working and learning, in relationships with men and women. From 25 to 40 is a large chunk of my life! The first snow of our winter here, my vegetable garden, my children at the skating rink, my first glimpse of a cocoon at a cottage of a friend, young fiddlehead greens my daughter brought home for me from camp. These are vivid and much loved images of Canada. I can live a certain way here and quite happily. But I want to take those fifteen years of growing and change and insight and vision and go back. And do what?

L. But, you see, you have a choice. I have none. For better, for worse, in sickness and in health... (laughs) I have to stay here.

A. And do what? Starting life at 40 and finding peace and meaning for yourself is not the same as making a new beginning at 25. And there is still growing old and dying. I can't die here!

(...*pause*...)

A. Do you have a sense of belonging to the Indian community, or any part of it here in Toronto?

L. No.

A. I have a certain difficulty because of my divorce and present lifestyle, in approaching other Indians here with confidence of finding acceptance. But you should have no such problem. The image you project of yourself--traditional, so married and so very Indian *(somewhat hostile tone)*-- should be accepted.

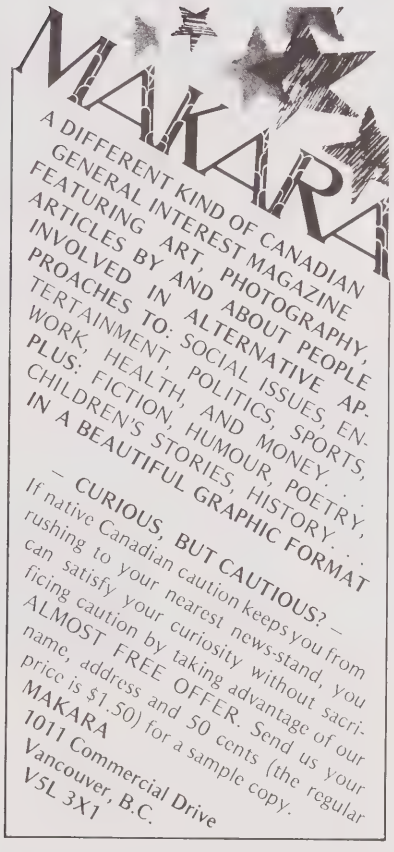
L. I have to move towards others as a family unit. The husbands may get along or not get along. One hears of jarring things. You are not free, intimate.

A. How about the non-Indian Canadian community?

L. I don't know. I haven't worked outside of the home. Some of the mothers at the school are doing so many other things-- going back to university. I feel that I am out of it. I am taking a clerical course.

A. A *clerical* course? You don't need a course to do clerical work. You know the alphabet. You know how to file. I thought you were going to take a course in musicology at York University?

L. But then we decided to buy a house and I will have to work now. I tell myself, perhaps, I will work for awhile and then there will be enough saved up one day and I will go back to university....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THE ART OF TAI CHI CH UAN: MADAME TSANG

by C. CHAN

Madame Tsang Wai-Tse is one rare example of an independent woman brought up in a traditional Chinese society. Since 1967, she has lived in Toronto where she has rapidly gained a reputation as a master of Tai Chi Chuan, the graceful exercise for health and meditation. In recent years she has appeared on TV Ontario, as well as in Toronto Life. *From 1973 to the present she has been teaching evening classes in Tai Chi at West Park Vocational School, Toronto.*

Born in Kwangsi Province, China in 1914, Madame Tsang was the youngest daughter in a family of five children. She married in 1933 and moved to Hong Kong in 1936. Then three years later World War II broke out. At this time, Madame Tsang not only gave birth to her first and only child, but also began to work as a doctor's assistant, administering tuberculosis vaccinations at various locations across Asia, from Hai Phong to Vietnam. When she returned to Hong Kong in 1941 the city was under Japanese occupation, and Madame Tsang was responsible for supporting not only her daughter and herself, but also her husband's family. For the next couple of years she worked extremely hard, taking any job she could get in order to survive. She was a street vendor for a while. Then she got involved in strenuous factory work. After a year in one particular factory, she contracted malaria and was forced to quit.

Madame Tsang's study of Tai Chi Chuan began in 1954. A friend, suffering from a goiter problem, was instructed by his doctor to learn Tai Chi to facilitate the healing process. However, he was too shy to go by himself, so Madame Tsang offered to take the classes with him. Gradually, one student after another left, until Madame Tsang was the only one remaining to complete learning the entire set of 108 movements. Her *Shih-fu* (teacher) converted his rooftop to an exercise area, and Madame Tsang faithfully practised everyday--until 1957 when she had to undergo an appendix operation. After a year, however, she was able to return to her tranquil art of Tai Chi. She did not interrupt her study again until 1964 when she left her home in Hong Kong to join her daughter in Canada.

-- -- --

"After I arrived in Canada, I did not practise much, I soon had arthritis in my fingers. They were stiff and painful, so much so that I couldn't even ring a doorbell with them. The medication from the doctors was not of much use, so I started practising Tai Chi daily again. Soon I was well."

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"Tai Chi Chuan, if practised consistently, not only helps in blood circulation, relaxation and breathing, but it can also help in curing ulcers, arthritis and asthma. I have many friends who have had such experiences."
"I always teach students individually, in order that they may ynderstand as best they can, how each movement is put together."

-- -- --

She and her daughter lived together in Toronto for a few years. In 1967 her daughter moved temporarily to the United States. Madame Tsang remained in Toronto and started the difficult task of tryong to find a job. She discovered that she was greatly impeded by the fact that she could not speak English --so she enrolled in an English class for new immigrants. A short time afterward, she secured her first job here, working on an assembly line in a toy factory.

1967 was also the year in which Madame Tsang was invited by Dr. Shih of the Royal Ontario Museum, to conduct a Tai Chi class for the museum staff. At first she was a bit skeptical. She still had problems in English, but she warmly accepted when Dr. Shih offered to act as translator. Madame Tsang spent the next four years teaching a class of about ten people once a week. During this time she greatly improved her English, self-studying it in her spare time, so that she could communicate more clearly with her students. Her second teaching experience came in 1972 when she was invited to teach in a Chinese painting studio in Toronto. Then a year later she began teaching evening classes in Tai Chi four nights per week at West Park Vocational School.

Madame Tsang is now approaching the age of 65-- the magic age which our society has designated as the legal age of retirement. However, this remarkable woman is a testimony to the fact that one does not have to retire and waste away at 65. She is a woman who is very much alive--mentally, physically and spiritually. Her daughter, son-in-law and two grandsons live in Mississauga, but Madame Tsang prefers to live alone in downtown Toronto. When she is not teaching or practising Tai Chi, she keeps herself busy practising her English penmanship, knitting and sewing, cooking her favourite Chinese dishes, visiting friends-- and generally remaining in touch with herself and the world around her.

- CONNIE CHAN

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"Teaching Tai Chi Chuan to me is not only a way of introducing the traditional Chinese culture to Canada. It is also an excellent opportunity for me to get acquainted with the community and communicate with new Canadian friends."

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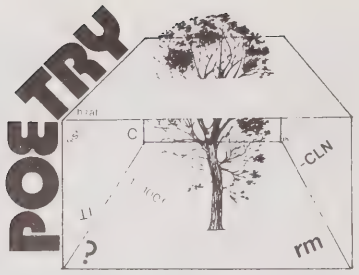


FOR SIGMUND FREUD

"...it is as though the whole process had already run its course and remains thenceforward insusceptible to influence -- as though indeed the difficult development to femininity had exhausted the possibilities of the person concerned."

Freud on 'Femininity'

A woman is a sometime thing
sometime because it takes much time
to get all the make-up on
behind the scenes there is work to be done
to set up the tropical jungle act
for instance
the palm trees the creeping man-eating vines
the parrots the boa constrictors
(all plastic of course)
to be rightly deployed
then the cast
the change of colour
from an average white or any other
to the blending of the right shades
until the inscrutable the ahistoric emerges
to become one and all the manicured dark continent
in the half of which monocled Viennese gentlemen peer
at the destructive the mysterious the ineluctable
to be a womb for this gentleman
should he choose to curl up and be a foetus
to be a tomb
should he need a taste of the eternal
in any case to allow him to play Dr. Livingstone
(all included in the charge).

Then
at the end of the show
the satisfied customer having paid
departed
in the ashen dawn
the mask removed
almost dead
a struggling drooping
half a person
praying for sleep
to generate the energy for the next illusion.

- HIMANI BANNERJI

Himani Bannerji is a part-time teacher in the Social Science Department of Atkinson College, York University, Toronto.

CAPTURED

Eyes that have seen
better days
return to choke
the last drop of life
out of you...

Fireflies of night,
they dance one last
relentless melody
hoping somehow
you'll recognize
the coward days
spent thinking
about freedom,
thinking...
about
freedom.

In the space
of unlimited thoughts,
her eyes race
in the confusion
of madmen
in the heat of the
final chase
to capture the memory
of summer suns
and fireflies.

Too late.
Blindness spits
away the chance.

He locks her
in the room
and swallows
the key.

- SYLVIA S. JONG

Old woman's last words
disappear with her footprints
into melting snow

*****

Petal by petal
old man opens up a rose
then counts worrybeads

- MOMO

BAZAARS

the Ladies Guild bake small cakes
with tape recorders in them
they say we stole their babies
pickled them for the revolution

on sundays the choir soprano
sings into mason jars
every other day
we dance or play bingo
enriching our lives
with the art of bonsai

- J.E.J.

COMPANION POEM

we drink tea from one bowl
friends for one evening
in a passenger boat

a foreigner like a beggar
knows how useful is a mosquito net
after a long journey

wait a moment for me
it is not far from your smile
to sleep with one more sip of wine

chopsticks on the table
are your hand and mine
useless without the other

do not ask again and again
how long i will stay ---
just show me the ivory necklace
you are carving for a happy girl

do not look out the window
at coal hill ---
the ming emperor's suicide
saddens our thoughts

from the central provinces
rebellion came to peking
why must an emperor die
when his temple is invaded?

is he not a man
companion to someone
who put his long gown
on the clothes-stand?

unlike us, the luckless
leader did not discover
the true pitch of the huang chung
yellow bell measuring
the harmony of the universe.

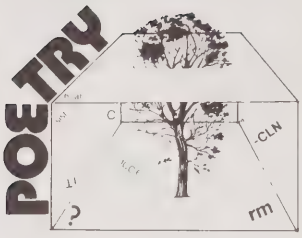
but let us leave the tao
to the taoists, walk with me
to the station, point out the beauty
of the purplish glazed wall
of the forbidden city

the wave of your silk scarf
on the writing-table breaks
with the turn of your hand
as you grip my fingers
in parting friendship

ngoh hai k'ui-ke pang-yau
ho ho yam ch'a
shik in
m-ho haak-hai
shui-in ngoh m toh shik k'ui

- LAKSHMI GILL

Lakshmi Gill is a Filipina Canadian poet living in New Brunswick.



GIFTS

Hot July day in Coaldale
I am curling my mother's
fine white hair with the new
mist curler iron I bought
for her 81st birthday and
she is telling me of her
early morning dream
that it was Christmas there was
music, I can't remember
the song, she says but
after a few more curls
she is singing in Japanese
"Joy to the world"
badly out of tune
because she is deaf now
and her throat is dry but
she was famous for her singing once
and she says in her dream
there was an old dry plant
that started to bloom.

- JOY KOGAWA

Joy Kogawa is the author of two books of poetry: A Choice of Dreams (1974) and Jericho Road (1977). She is currently working on a novel about the Japanese Canadians.

Identity

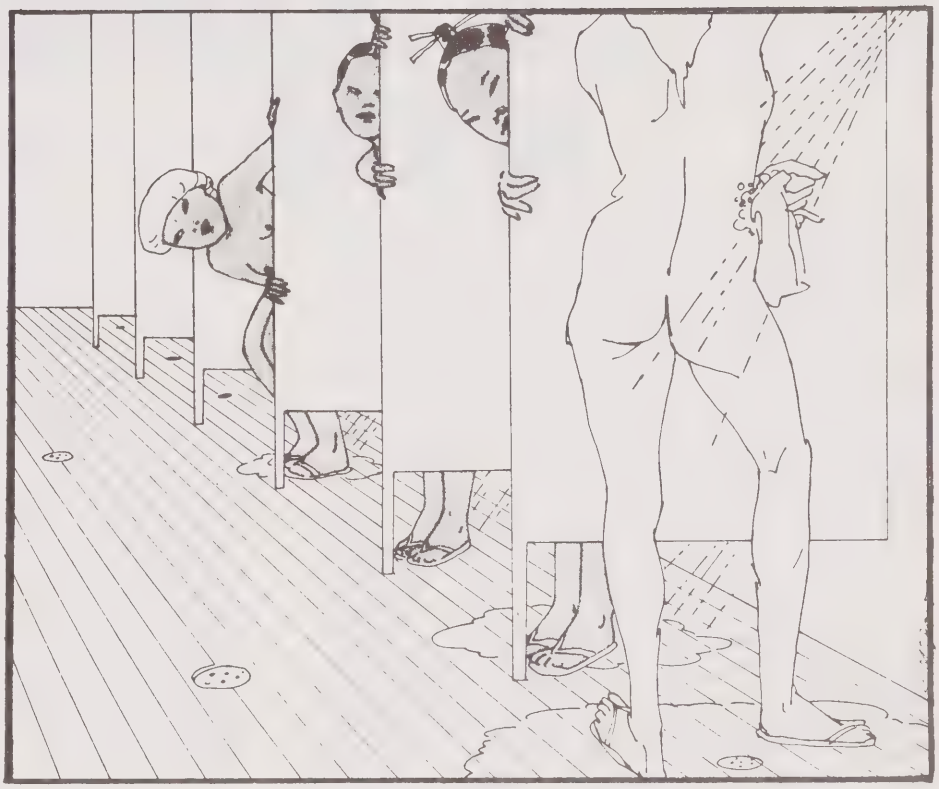
Before the closed door of the world
I stand
waiting
to be
asked in
to be
approved of
to be
loved
waiting
to be come
inside
they explode
my parents
in sex and anger
I wait for them
to finish
for her
to stumble out
to pick up
her pieces
ugly fat pitiful
and I ask
am I she
is she good
is she beautiful
always outside
I wait
my mother in me

- HIMANI BANNERJI

Dubious Award

The Asianadian's Dubious Award (or *The Inscrutable Occidental Award*, or *The Lice in Our Rice Award*) is given quarterly to writers, artists, companies or organizations for outstanding achievements in stereotyped journalism and advertising.

Nominations for this award may be made by any reader who, in his/her daily reading, comes across articles or pictures of unusual brilliance in depicting Asian Canadian stereotypes, or in exploiting the many myths about Asians in Canada. Nominations for The Spring 1979 *Dubious Award* may be sent to: *The Asianadian*.



THE DUBIOUS AWARD for Fall/Winter, 1978 goes to:

SHEILA McGRAW

Comments from the Award Jury

The cartoon above by Ms. McGraw, appeared in Toronto's *The Globe and Mail* on September 21, 1978, p. T10. It was used to illustrate Elizabeth MacCallum's article entitled, "Whetting and Quenching Neighbourly Curiosity in a Peking Bath-House". We feel that it exemplifies the subtle brand of racism which is often disguised by an anthropological or upper middle class, liberalism.

We deplore the stereotypic, condescending depiction of Chinese women as cute, brown *China Dolls*. Little, dark breasts are exposed, but the Chinese women are obviously viewed as children, peering with innocent wonder at the physically more adult-like white woman. Isn't it interesting how Western artists unabashedly exploit non-Western women in the nude (*cf. National Geographic*) as though they are *objects* of the 'local colour'. Asian women are not all brown and do not all look alike. And many do not find a white-skinned woman a source of curiosity or fascination.

We do not urge Ms. McGraw to be less patronizing in her future drawings of Asians because it is probably too late.

THOUGHTS IN THE SUBURBS: THE JOURNEY HOME

by EILEEN DUH

Those boys are cutting across my yard again. They run alongside the hedge, turn their heads to look furtively at the house, and then disappear between the cedars.

I go to the window, but they are gone already. I never get anywhere fast enough now. Besides, I don't want to trip on the furniture--these Western homes are so cluttered. Those boys have worn out a path in the grass, and I wonder if they'd do it if we weren't Chinese. Sometimes they chase each other in our front yard, and trample all over the flower beds. They ruined a lot of tulips last year. I've told Shiu Lei again and again to watch out for them and tell them off, but she's too scared. "Oh, Ma", she'd say, "You're so petty. They're such rowdy boys, I wouldn't want to approach them. They might say something really insulting, or play dirty tricks on us. The best thing is to ignore it as much as we can." It's hard to ignore it when they do it so often. The real reason why Shiu Lei doesn't want to speak to them is that she's terrified of having to speak to them in English. I have to give her credit for having the guts to start learning English at the age of forty-five, but she isn't learning too much. The memory goes after awhile.

My memory isn't good for much either, except for bringing back scenes from my old village and images of those sixty oak trees outside my house that the bandits 'bought' for a ridiculously small sum, and then cut down, one by one. These pictures become more and more real in my mind, and sometimes, friends and sisters of earlier times speak to me as if they were right here beside me. I reply, and I see Shiu Lei's curious eyes fixed on me. "Daydreaming again, Ma?" she asks, probably making another mental note that I am getting fuzzy in the head. Sometimes I don't know where I am anymore. Why did I ever let myself get talked into moving here with her family? Here where neighbours stare at my bound feet, smile distantly, and disappear quickly into their clean, neat houses. The boys don't trample their flower beds, and imitate their language as they walk along the street, "Chin Chun Chon".

The neighbours never came over to make friends, though heavens knows Shiu Lei tried. Two months after we moved here, she gave a party and invited all the neighbours. She cooked for two days, making all the things she thought they would like. Jane and Andy happened to be visiting at the time, and they were given the job of talking to the guests and seeing that everyone was comfortable. It was a perfect arrangement. I had planned to stay out of things, but the excitement was too much for me, and I trotted from the kitchen to the living room, looking at everything and getting in everybody's way. Shiu Lei was in such a festive mood that she even developed a sense of humor, and called me the General Inspector. It was almost like a wedding party in the old days, with Shiu Lei cooking like a fury, and the food piled high in the most amazing combinations.

Then the guests arrived. Big people with red faces and loud voices filled the room, a little frightening to me as they boomed away from their height. The women wore shiny, low-necked and low-backed dresses, reeking of perfume. Shiu Lei smiled and nodded, although it was obvious even to me that she didn't understand the jokes. Escaping into the kitchen, she returned a moment later with a reluctant Andy whom she abandoned mercilessly. Poor Andy was soon surrounded by people who talked and laughed, but he did not laugh. His face tensed up as he tried to say something, only to be inter-

rupted and cut off. "Ho, ho, ho, " went the men as Andy looked more and more upset. Meanwhile, the women were examining the paintings and the vases, saying, "Oooh, oooh" to each piece. I, of course, didn't escape their scrutiny. They stared at my feet and talked among themselves, as if I too were one of the objects on show. No doubt they were wondering how I could ever allow such a barbaric practice to be done to me. I got up to take refuge in the kitchen, and my feet stumbled a little, for they had become numb with sitting; the women shrieked.

I stayed in my room for the rest of the evening. The party was never mentioned again although Andy was very quiet and had a strange, ironical smile on his face for the rest of his visit. And so the neighbours remained at the same level of smiling and saying "Hi" and Shiu Lei and her husband began to associate with people like themselves, also locked into their pretty suburban houses.

I don't belong here. There's nothing to do except walk around the yard a little in the summer, or watch television of which I don't understand a word. The best times are when Jane and Andy visit. I go walking around, leaning on their arms, and I don't have to watch every step I take. I'm no longer vulnerable, and with them beside me I don't mind people looking at me. Let them look. Jane and Andy have so much more patience than their mother. They talked to me about school and books and other cities, and they always bring me a small present to show that they still care for a silly old woman.

Back in the old village, the best time was always the New Years when my eldest daughter Shiu Chung came home from Shanghai. It was a triumphant occasion. She would wear a beautiful, lightly-quilted gown lined with fox-fur and she would ride the cart as if she were a heroine. She was always followed by two more carts piled high with preserved fruits, tea and food for the New Year. At that time, I never had to send to the town for the New Year supplies. I was proud of my daughter and everyone envied me. To become a teacher in a missionary school in Shanghai was quite an achievement for someone from that tiny village and it was a special triumph for me since Shiu Chung was the first girl in that village to go to school. During each visit, she would try to teach me a few characters, and I would try hard to please her, but I didn't get much further than learning to write my name. I heard stories about Shanghai -- the wide streets and tall buildings with clocks on the sides, and it all seemed to be a fairy-tale to me. I never saw Shanghai, but Shiu Lei brought me to Hong Kong which was bewildering even after twelve years. I should have gone back to the village when Shiu Lei decided to leave Hong Kong, but she would never have let me because she felt too guilty. And yet, she never realized how confusing all this is to me. It has been terrifying to be in this cold country except for occasional visits to Chinatown. I told Shiu Lei that I wished I could live there where there are other old people I could make friends with, but she dismissed my remarks as another of my whims.

Shiu Lei is so bound by her sense of duty that she won't let me out of her sight. I suppose I've reached the age when the old are treated as infants. My bodily functions are her only concern and my daily routine is handled with an automatic efficiency which puts me on the level of a household chore. Help Ma downstairs in the morning, get her some breakfast, deposit her in a safe spot maybe turn on the T. V., get her lunch; the same thing everyday. I'm a chore. My appetite and my state of health are discussed as if I were an item of news. I have to leave this place--this house which is so tidy that I can never be but a tiresome burden to a dutiful but weary daughter. I can never help her with her work, and she doesn't even want me to peel vegetables for her, for I cut myself every time. Then we are both furious -- I with myself for not putting on a better show, and she with herself for getting more trouble out of a chore that she could have done herself in a third of the time.

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I am tired of sitting here, looking at the yard. It's no better sitting in the front either, for all I'd see would be cars speeding by, and young people going to school. I miss sitting in the courtyard of the old house where all the women would gather in the evening and talk about the work done and what to do with the vegetable crop. I had an infallible hand for pickling vegetables and eggs and nobody else could do it right. I was always so proud to be able to load a table respectably for a visiting relative at an hour's notice. Nobody needs my suggestions here anymore. Besides, I seem to be using the wrong words all the time, and Shiu Lei gets impatient. When I tell her to light the oil lamp in the evening, she would say everytime, "Ma, you're wandering again", or, "You never seem to grasp that things are different now." But I do. It's just so hard to learn new words and remember them.

I must have dozed off. It's already dark and the sound of mahjong tiles and voices floats from downstairs. It's another one of those evenings. Dinner had been utterly tedious for they talked about nothing, but real estate and business ventures and

how to make money. I sat in my chair trying to follow the conversation, but without success. I must have sighed heavily without realizing it for everybody looked at me and Shiu Lei offered to take me upstairs to rest. I am a little annoyed with myself for I try so hard to be "there" that these little incidents are more than betrayals of my age to me. They banish me to that phase of waiting for the end of it all and I am not ready for it just yet. Maybe a walk will do me good. I won't call any of them for that will disturb the game and Shiu Lei will be annoyed with my many moods again. I put on a sweater in case it is chilly outside and I go downstairs stealthily, careful not to make a sound clinging to the bannister. It is quite an effort. When I make it to the bottom, I'm breathing hard from the exertion. Luckily they're playing in the dining room and can't see me groping around in the hall. I manage to get the door open without a sound, and I step outside I feel as excited as a child on a forbidden adventure and fearful as an escaped convict. I'm not that helpless yet, I mutter smugly to myself as I pick my way carefully down the garden path. It's so nice outside in the quiet evening, cool and dark and peaceful and all I can hear is the breeze singing in the trees. A cat scurries off across the street. I suddenly have a notion to go across the street and walk a little in the park where there are no street lamps, but only the moon to light my way. Over there I could very well be back home in the woods outside the village where I would walk on nights too hot for me to fall asleep. When I was younger and had to visit my parents, I would often start out at dawn and walk all day only to reach my parents' town at night. If I had my way, I would have walked only at night for it was so much cooler and less tiring without all the distractions of the daylight world. But the other women told me so many ghost stories in such vivid, terrifying detail that I never walked at night again without feeling uneasy. I know better now. There is nothing to be afraid of except myself.

Taking small steps, I cross the road, looking both ways which was quite unnecessary and I make it to the other side. Here it is dark and soothing and I can breathe easily once more. It's hard to see where to go in the dark and perhaps it's better to sit down for awhile. I'm quite tired from the adventure already and it would be good to rest. I lower myself carefully onto the cool, thick grass--a superb bed for me. I look back at the houses all lit up with activity, all set apart from each other. Not even a sound escapes from these tightly sealed-up boxes. If there were even a sound of a radio blaring out some shrill music, this world would be a little more human. But the people here display no sign of living. All the quarrelling is smothered by the brick walls and they only smile and wave and talk pleasantly when they are confronted outside.

Back in my old house, everyone knew what was going on, but we also knew how to "not listen". All the modern talk about privacy was started by someone who didn't know how to create mental space for himself and turned into an obsessive cleanliness and a pathetic solitude. All this becomes suddenly clear to me although I have known it for a long time. Living here has poisoned me too and I must escape. Shiu Lei is too scared to leave this narrow world of beautiful houses. I shall have to abandon her to being forever locked in her household routine. I set my head down on the grass and I think of my other daughter, Shiu Chung who tried to reach my heart. I never lost her, but it was I who left her behind. Perhaps it's not too late to remember her and those happy times we shared. I am very drowsy. I stretch myself out to sleep a while knowing that I will see her in my dreams.

Eileen Duh was a student of Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto.

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white male supremacy and the 'oriental doll'

by DAWN KIYOYE ONO

Recently, while sitting in a coffee shop at York University with another Asian woman, I overheard a disturbing conversation. Seated at the next table was a group of white, middle aged men discussing the relative merits of Japanese and Chinese women--as playmates, bedmates--as *oriental* receptacles. What was particularly frightening about these men was that their racism and male chauvinism were thinly masked by an unemotional, pseudo-intellectual tone. Puffing contemplatively on their pipes and stroking their long, greying beards, these white male supremacists, using their academic rhetoric, proceeded to describe the physiological structure, the sexual proficiency and obedience of *oriental* women. These men were not high school jocks, but apparently (from certain revealing references), *scholars* of East Asian culture. Throughout their comparative study they *seemed to be* oblivious to the presence of the two Asian women at the next table. My friend and I remained frozen and speechless during the nightmare, but inside us atomic bombs were going through several stages of explosion. Finally, as the racist, sexist coterie got up to leave I glared at the most vocal member, a short balding 50ish year-old, and uttered, "Look who's talking about short legs!" He stood there stunned for 2-3/4 seconds and then rushed out self-consciously.

In retrospect I must admit that my desire for revenge was satisfied. I did manage to assert myself and demonstrate an atypical behaviour. However, I also regret my childish impulsiveness. I wish that I could have invented a more intelligent retort, but at the time my anger overwhelmed me. The hostility which I expressed towards the men in the coffee shop had been building up for several years. Since the age of five I have been aware of the insidious evil of racism and the equally insidious evil of sexism. And gradually, as I increased my exposure to external influences such as television and movies I began to see that these two evils are inexorably intertwined.

From my perspective as a Japanese Canadian woman movie buff, who grew up during the sixties glued to a television set (usually tuned to a Buffalo station), I perceive Hollywood movies as the most pervasive and dangerous culprits in perpetuating the negative, one-dimensional images of Asian women. During my childhood commercial American films constituted my primary source of information about my Japanese heritage-- and therefore about myself. After World War II the 'mysterious Orient' became an extremely popular setting for American film makers. Some of the films which come to mind most readily are: *Sayonara* (57), *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (58), *World of Suzie Wong* (60), *Flower Drum Song* (61), *Bridge to the Sun* (61), *The Ugly American* (62), *Cry for Happy* (60) and *A Girl Named Tamiko* (63).

The Chinese and Japanese women in all of these films easily fell into one of two categories, providing me with two possible role models: the slinky, peanut-brained Suzie Wong prostitute-- or the pure, modest flower of passivity. It is interesting to note that the same actresses were cast i.e. typecast repeatedly, so that their names in fact became the labels for the stereotypical images which they represented on the silver screen. Because they were never allowed to portray fleshed out, multi-dimensional personalities, these actresses seemed exactly the same in every role. For example, Nancy Kwan and France Nuyen, two popular Eurasian actresses, appeared again and again on my television screen, reinforcing the coy, exotic, quiet seductress image in such films as *A Girl Named Tamiko* (63) and *World of Suzie Wong* (60). And maintaining the other Hollywood-manufactured caricature of Asian women was meek and innocent Miyoshi Umeki, shuffling about in her traditional kimono and hiding her face behind her hands in such films as Joshua Logan's *Sayonara* (57), for which she won an Academy Award.

The most salient features shared by the Nancy Kwan doll and the Miyoshi Umeki doll

were their mysteriousness and absolute subservience to the white, usually military, American male. Because these 'feminine', *oriental* dolls could never pose a threat to his easily shattered male vanity, he perceived them as desirable curiosities with whom he could act out all his power fantasies. Implicit in this condescending, chauvinistic attitude is of course a heavy dose of American, post-World War II imperialism. The Japanese (and later the Koreans and the Vietnamese) constituted the inferior race--the *gooks* that had to be conquered and exploited. Thus, by taking sexual advantage of the Japanese women, the white American man was expressing his military domination over the enemy--humiliating and emasculating the Japanese man. On the surface, the film *Sayonara* might appear to be promoting racial harmony because of its sympathetic treatment of interracial marriage, but in actuality it is only reinforcing the ethnocentrism and sexism inherent in American imperialism.

Perhaps I am being too simplistic in my condemnation of post-war Hollywood depictions of Asian women. In order to formulate a more complete picture one must examine an exhaustive list of films. The topic to which I am addressing myself indeed requires a more in-depth approach. Right now, however, I can only speak from my childhood recollections, which I admit have become coloured by my feminist outlook. I could not pretend to be objective here. For too long I have writhed in anguish watching cool William Holden manhandling Nancy Kwan-- or watching the legendary macho king, Marlon Brando, caressing lotus blossom geishas with his mumbling voice. For too long I have suffered in silence listening to white Canadian men tell me that they are attracted to my 'oriental mystique', and that I "would probably make an excellent mistress." For too long I have smiled back with gritted teeth at white, bourgeois Canadian women who smile patronizingly and ask me if I can speak English, expecting me, perhaps, to at least have a Miyoshi Umeki accent.

The fact that the Hollywood stereotypes of Asian women are still so trenchant, not only in my mind, but in the consciousness of white North Americans, is a testimony to the enormous power of television and film as tools of indoctrination, as components of the American propaganda machine. Throughout my childhood and adolescence the only media images of Asian women were the good or bad, but always obedient 'oriental' dolls. I feel that these stereotypes have been largely responsible for Canadian society's prevalent racist-sexist attitude towards Asian and Asianadian women. The York University incident is illustrative of the fact that 33 years after World War II the situation has not changed. White male supremacy is still rampant and the negative images of Asian women have not been erased from the collective conscious, despite all our efforts to counteract them. Until our image in the media begins to reflect reality and we are regarded as intelligent human beings rather than docile, sexual dolls, our struggle as women and as Asianadians must continue.

Dawn Kiyoye Ono is an actress currently residing in Toronto.

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with Shizuye Takashima

Shizuye Takashima is a gifted and sensitive Canadian artist whose work can be found in some of the country's major galleries, most recently at the Loranger Gallery in Toronto and at the Burnaby Gallery in Burnaby, B.C. After graduating from the Ontario College of Art in the early fifties she spent several years travelling in Europe, Mexico, the United States and Asia. Takashima is a Japanese Canadian, but she identifies with all cultures, for she believes that the word 'culture' means "a call to light"--"the preserving of things beautiful." And as an artist, she is influenced by beauty, no matter which culture created it. Her artistic skill and human sensibility have been revealed through her writing, as well as her paintings. In 1971, Tundra Books published her book A Child in Prison Camp, *a gentle, moving account of the Japanese Canadian evacuation, based on Takashima's childhood memories. In 1975, the Fuji Drama Company, a Tokyo repertory group, adapted the book to the stage as a musical. According to Takashima, the beautiful music composed for this production expresses "the essence of peace" --the essence of her art.*

ASIANADIAN: I think that the power of A Child in Prison Camp *lies in the fact that you wrote it through a child's eyes. Were the memories of the evacuation at the surface of your mind--or was writing the book a long, difficult process?*

TAKASHIMA: I didn't keep a journal during my childhood. The memories were in my subconscious and they surfaced as I started writing. I kept the book very simple-- as a child would feel and think at that time. I thought that this perspective would be much more interesting and honest than an adult's.

What are your present feelings about the past? Do you feel any bitterness towards the Canadian government?

No. I don't believe in feeling bitter. Whatever happens is my *karma* and I have to learn from it. Vindictiveness doesn't solve anything. There's already too much hatred in this world and by my adding to it through feelings of revenge, I would only become like my oppressor. I must say, however, that I'm very much against the War Measures Act which created the whole evacuation situation. My opposition arises out of the injustice, not personal bitterness. As a human being, I am outraged by injustice against any minority.

> "OUR FREEDOM IS FREEDOM ONLY AS THE GOVERNMENT CHOOSES TO MAKE IT SO."

Obviously the evacuation had a profound impact on you since it happened at such a vulnerable stage of your life. Can you describe how it affected you psychologically and politically?

I think the most profound psychological impact as a child was the utter helplessness of the whole situation. When a government imposes that kind of law, you can't fight it. It's like the Jews in World War II--or the North American Indians. They can't fight it because the government controls the army. The government controls everything. In the broader perspective, the evacuation reminds us of the fact that our freedom is only relative. Our freedom is freedom only as the government chooses to make it so. This is the situation around the world-- but more so in Canada. Canada is a strange country. We're supposed to be so multi-lingual and tolerant, but we're really quite bigoted.

Photo credit: Gordon Ross

Can you tell me how your experience in other countries influenced you as an artist? Did you attend any formal art school during your stay in Europe?

I went to the Ontario College of Art for three years before I left for Europe in 1956 and that was enough. I don't believe in being in school for the rest of your life. To be a good artist you have to learn to be a human being. You have to develop your technical skills, of course, but after that it's up to you to learn to live in the world and experience new things. Travelling in Europe certainly influenced me a great deal because when I left for Europe, Toronto was a very provincial city and there were no decent commercial galleries in Canada that would accept me as a young artist. So I realized that I had to broaden my horizons.

Did you travel alone?

Yes. I believe in travelling alone. I have my own pace and rhythm. As an artist I see things in a certain way and if I want to stay in a certain place longer to observe more closely a certain play of light, or cloud in the sky, I can stay. It's selfish in a way, but I have to be selfish in order to do what I want as an artist. Travelling alone allows you to be more observant and attentive towards the new environment. Also, I enjoy meeting new people and when you're alone the local people take you in more readily. I never book ahead for accomodations. I always have the utmost faith that I will find an interesting place to stay.

In places like Turkey and Iran, travelling alone had its disadvantages because I couldn't go out at night. They're not used to seeing woman walking around alone. You really have to have incredible faith to travel by yourself, especially as a woman. Some people may find it frightening to go to a foreign country where they have no contacts, but I think it's an exciting adventure. I love stepping off a plane or train where I don't know a single soul. When I landed in India I said: "Isn't it wonderful! I don't know a single soul in this whole country!" But I met some beautiful people who took me in and treated me like a daughter.

What are your impressions of India?

It was an incredible experience. I spent six months there in 1972. It's the most beautiful place in the world-- and also the most

tragic. That's why so many great spiritual leaders have emerged from India-- because of this stark contrast between the great, great poverty and the great riches. And you really need the two for your spirit to grow. Because you have to learn to see both sides at the same time and cope with what you see. You don't find great leaders in Canada. I think we're too comfortable here. Our society doesn't create heroes.

"ARTISTS MUST COMMIT THEMSELVES ONE WAY OR ANOTHER."

Have you been more strongly influenced by woman artists?

I don't like a particular artist because of his or her sex. I like them because of the art they do. What's more important to me is what the artist is saying and *how* it is being said. Is the artist saying it beautifully? So much art today is ugly and not saying anything. As far as I'm concerned, non-commital art is not art. Artists must commit themselves one way or another.

Do you mean that artists have to take a particular political stance?

Not necessarily political, but as a human being. Most artists today are afraid to think. They do whatever is easiest. They all get on the bandwagon and do crazy abstracts that they can sell to the Art Gallery of Ontario. You watch, in twenty years the AGO will probably be stuck with millions and millions of dollars worth of art that's actually worth nothing. The art market, as it is, enables artists to con the people and the galleries into believing that garbage is art.

Then, in your opinion, has the whole thing become a big game?

It's not just a game in the galleries, but in all the arts. When you consider the fact that Elizabeth Taylor automatically gets a million dollars or more for a film, regardless of how good or bad her performance is, there must be something wrong with our society. Our sense of values has gone haywire. It doesn't matter anymore how good or bad your work is. Quality is not as important now. It's a sign of humanity's demoralization. Art is supposed to be a reflection of society. And when we accept ugly paintings as great works of art we're in serious trouble.

What do you think constitutes true art?

True art must stand the test of time, like Shakespeare or Dostoevsky or Ibsen, for example. What Ibsen wrote about the situation of women at the turn of the century is still valid now. His words reached me, not just because I'm a woman, but because I'm a human being. Great art is not Campbell's tomato soup thrown on a canvas. Some of these pop artists might honestly be trying to make a statement about society. But let's not hang their art in our museums and call it the greatest thing that ever happened. I question the competence of critics who overrate this sort of painting. In my opinion, they're afraid to admit that it's garbage just because it's 'different' and 'shocking'. What counts now is how 'original' you are-- but original in a crass, artificial sense. You have to be as avant-garde as possible. Artists themselves who've fallen into this trap are just con artists. It's all a big bore. But I think young people might be able to change all that. In the drawing and painting class I teach at OCA I tell my students to become responsible artists-- that is, to do their own thing and follow their own individual instincts. And I'm encouraged by what I see in them.

Are there any 20th century artists whom you particularly admire?

I admire the work of Emily Carr and Alex Colville. I also like Georgia O'Keeffe 's work very much. I was in New Mexico a couple of years ago. That country is Georgia O'Keeffe country and you understand and appreciate her paintings when you go there. Her art has that stillness, compositional simplicity and inner peace characteristic of Japanese art. You feel this when you go to New Mexico-- the spirit of Pueblo Indians is still there in the deserts and mesas. The clouds are very low. It's beautiful.

"I'M GLAD MY NAME IS TAKASHIMA, BECAUSE PEOPLE REMEMBER IT."

In your experience as a Japanese Canadian woman artist, which has been more common-- racial discrimination or sexual discrimination?

I haven't encountered any blatant racial or sexual discrimination in the art world. I'm glad my name is Takashima because people remember it. My Japanese heritage has been a real asset to me in my career.

But when you were just starting out as a professional artist, didn't some critics have preconceived notions about your art because of your Japanese name?

No, most of them didn't try to push me into a Japanese stereotype; but I do remember ten years ago, when I had a show in Vancouver, a critic asked me: "Did you do these paintings by yourself?" I said yes. But, he didn't quite believe me. He couldn't relate my paintings to me physically because they were very strong paintings. Also, he assumed for years that I was a man. And then I turned out to be this little Japanese woman. The misconceptions about Japanese women can be partly attributed to our past images in movies. Either you're the Suzy Wong whore or the submissive type. But let's be honest. Although Japanese Canadian women are not 'obedient', the majority are on the quiet side. They still tend to fade into the background even though they might not want to. They aren't very vocal. We have to undo centuries of brain-washing. It'll take a long time but it's coming.

Do you think it's possible for a woman in our sexist society to pursue a career and take care of a family at the same time?

Sure. A lot of women I know are doing it. I have a friend who's a professional scientist with three children. But to do that in our society today you have to have enough money to hire a good nanny and housekeeper. If a woman doesn't have that kind of money, I'm afraid she'd find it very difficult. If I had to change diapers, cook supper and clean house-- and at the same time try to paint, I think I would resent it terribly. The way society is structured now, it's up to the individual woman to decide what is more important to her. For me, painting is more important. When I was a child in the ghost towns I used to wonder: "What am I going to do with myself?" Most women at that period were all housewives. But I knew as a child that I wanted to enter the arts field.

Would you identify yourself as a feminist?

Not feminist in a militant way. I strongly support the idea of women seeking their full rights as persons equal to men, but I don't believe a woman should try to imitate men by smoking cigarettes or going down into the coal mines--or any other superficial, symbolic gesture to *prove* her equality. I think the best way to achieve equality is for women to do their own thing. Above all, be yourself and try to set an example for other women--"Hey, maybe I could do that too."

Are most of the subjects for your paintings self-generated?

Yes. The last show in Burnaby, B.C. is about the new age-- the age of women, the ancient East Indian prophecy, that the world will never know peace until women take their rightful place alongside men as equal partners. And I depict women as warriors along with the men because we all have to go out into the world as warriors with the aim of seeking ourselves--our inner selves. Unless we tap our inner resources we don't grow spiritually.

> "EVEN WHEN I'M NINETY-NINE AND BLIND, I'LL STILL BE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING AN ARTIST."

Would you say that you've devoted your life to your art?

I'm in the process of devoting my life to the arts, literature and music as well, to expand my horizons. Being an artist involves the process of becoming a better human being. It's a process of learning. Even when I'm ninety-nine and blind, I'll still be in the process of being an artist. It's a matter of continual involvement.

As an artist, how do you feel about Trudeau's recent cutbacks in funding for the arts?

I think the government needs a general house-cleaning. There's a general incompetence at every level and in every department. In Ottawa alone many government owned buildings are empty and there are too many redundant jobs, too many people creating a bureaucracy in which one hand doesn't know what the other hand is doing. Cutting the arts is not going to solve the problem. The money is still just filtering through a bag full of holes.

Along with the wastage of our money is the disgraceful dishonesty of the men we ourselves elect. The criminal has become glorified in our society. Look at Nixon. A lot of people still applaud him. We allow corruption to grow by remaining silent about it. People can't think anymore. Canadians, especially, are very apathetic politically. We don't realize the dangers of giving some of these politicians power over our lives. They can influence entire generations. Look what happened to us under the War Measures Act.

Yes, if the evacuation hadn't occurred, many Sansei *would probably be living in "Beautiful British Columbia" now and they'd be able to speak Japanese.*

It's a shame that many Sansei were not taught to speak Japanese. Whatever language you learn, whether Japanese, Chinese or French-- or Hindi, is going to benefit you. Learning a new language, like learning a new skill, expands your modes of communication. That's why all the recent objections to mandatory French lessons in public schools is so ridiculous, because French is such a beautiful language.

What are your views on censorship in the arts?

I don't believe in censorship per se because people on censor boards are so dumb. When they start banning beautiful books like *Catcher in the Rye* and *The Diviners* and condone violent trash like *Jaws*, there is something wrong. I'm against it purely because the people who are given the power to censor are so incompetent. Again, it's a reflection of a complete moral breakdown. We no longer can tell the difference between what's ugly and what's beautiful.

Do you think there's any hope at all for the future? How do you see your role as an artist in this world of twisted values?

I believe that there's hope in children, for they are the future of the world. And we better try to help them in every way we can by trying to make their present atmosphere more human. I've been working on a new book for children. It's about a little boy in search of a tiger with divine qualities to heal his ailing father. It's a mystical book because it's about believing in the impossible-- something which we've forgotten how to do in our society. We need the magic of fairy tales now more than ever with all our cynicism. There's a deep meaning in fairy tales. We have to accept the truth of the situation, but we as individuals, must try to make it a better world by seeking the beautiful--depicting the beautiful on a canvas in a beautiful way, with the hope that people will be influenced by it.

Community News

The Asianadian Resource Workshop in cooperation with the Cross Cultural Communication Centre, Toronto has sponsored a weekly seminar series on over-looked Asian communities in Toronto. These seminars, held every Tuesday in October, represent the Workshop's continuous involvement in the community, in an effort to raise the awareness of the public at large of the significant contributions of Asians to Canadian society.

The speakers included Tony Chan of the Workshop who spoke about the Rise of the New Asian Canadian consciousness; and the editor of *Balita*, Ruben Cusipag, on the Filipinos in Canada, and the fight against the Marcos regime in the Philippines. Raymond Choi of the Korean Human Rights Council joined Reverend Lee and Hoyoung Yoon in a discussion on the recent immigration of Koreans to Canada, as well as the campaign against the Park government in South Korea. Phuk Le of Seneca College ended the seminars with a talk on Vietnam and the Vietnamese in Canada and the United States.

The seminars were well attended with notable participation from other non-Asian ethnic groups. Publication of these seminars is anticipated. Please contact the Workshop for further details.

ON THE FIRING LINE

Why We Ignore Birth Control: A Personal Comment

The following article was written by a white Canadian woman, but we feel that much of what she is saying about attitudes towards sex and birth control can be universalized to our Asianadian sisters.

It seems irresponsible these days, with so many methods of birth control available, for a woman to become pregnant if she does not want to. It is so easy to condemn women under the present conditions of our society, and feel that they should be made to 'pay' for their mistakes by having to carry through with the pregnancy. Since much of the anti-abortion backlash takes on this 'no excuse' attitude, and since I am a woman who has personally experienced an unplanned pregnancy, I would like to try to explain why I feel that so many unplanned pregnancies occur.

Despite the numerous types of birth control available today, there is no perfect method of contraception. All the alternatives that are offered to us can and do fail, for any one of a number of reasons. Ignorance may cause a method to be used improperly, and most methods of birth control can fail even though they are being used perfectly. Finally, if a woman or couple don't like the method that is being used, it is easy to forget (to take the pill, for example), or to say, "Well, it won't hurt just this once to do without."

Society tends to be forgiving of women who have tried to use some method of birth control and failed for one reason or another. Having made the attempt to protect themselves, perhaps they deserve to be gotten out of the situation.

There are, however, a significant number of women who become pregnant while using no method of birth control at all. I was one of these. The popular notion about women like myself under such circumstances is that we are ignorant about birth control. Well, I came through a school system in which birth control had been covered completely in both health and biology classes. Before my pregnancy, I knew every method of birth control in use and how each worked, far better I'm sure than either of my parents ever had. I understood the mechanics of birth control, but no one had ever equipped me with an attitude that would allow me to apply that knowledge to myself.

I was raised, as so many of us are, to believe that a nice girl doesn't go to bed with a man she isn't married to. At the age of twenty I could no longer accept that idea but neither could I whole-heartedly reject it. I still needed the approval of people who held these values. I was a nice girl after all and had never felt like anything else. So I became sexually active, but denied my sexuality in the strongest possible way that I possibly could: by doing nothing concerning birth control.

It is of course a twisted logic, and one which we all pay for. Some women are luckier than others. They continue to be sexually active without mishaps until they can accept their own sexuality. Many women are not as lucky. I became pregnant after a single act of unprotected intercourse. I don't feel that this makes me better or worse than any other woman who has experienced the pain of an unplanned pregnancy. We are all victims of a morality that makes unreasonable demands on us, and an unreasoned response is not surprising.

I believe that women will continue to become pregnant against their will as long as such moral attitudes are imposed on us, no matter how perfect methods of birth control become. Of course, people will tell you that attitudes are changing, that no one takes such an outmoded value system seriously anymore. If you really believe that, ask yourself the following question: how well protected was I the first time that I had intercourse? Then ask your friends.

The author of the above wishes to remain anonymous.

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We're Just Children

The following passages are selected from interviews recorded this summer with girls at a Chinese summer school in Toronto.

MARIANNE LEM *age 10*

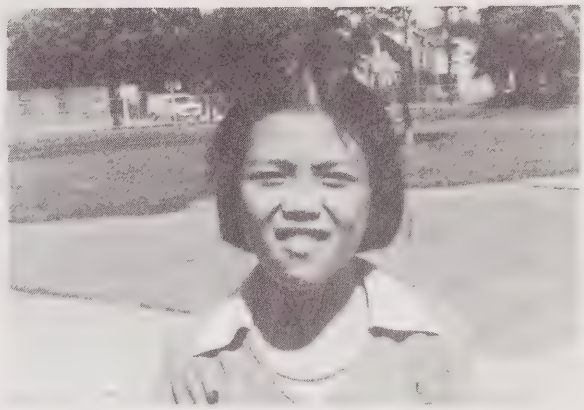
I enjoy going to summer school because I can learn new things and meet new friends. I like recreation and drawing class. I have learned to play badminton and I made a model with construction paper. But I was upset to find our work ripped and crushed the next day. I am happy that I learned Chinese in summer school. It was fun to learn Chinese songs, but I find it hard to memorize the words.

WAI-FONG CHAN *age 10*

I like our neighbour friend Mrs.Duffy. She is a very nice lady. She always helps us out when we have troubles. She stays all alone and has the biggest backyard in our neighbourhood. She is very kind and lets us play there. My parents own a small store. When I get off from school I help Mom with housework. We don't have a washing machine so we have to wash clothes by hand. I also help my Mom to look after my baby brother.

TERRY CHAN age 11

Last summer we went to Seattle to visit our cousin. Then we drove to Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Disneyland was great fun. We were there for a day. It was so much fun that I think I could spend *years* there. The Universal Studio was interesting. I never thought film making was like what I have seen. Everything was so real -- and yet so unreal.



ELSA TJIU age 10

Last Chinese New Year we closed our store and went out for dinner. But I still had to go to school on that day. I didn't get presents from my parents. I like Christmas, though. In 1976, I was in my old house. I liked it there a lot. We had a big tree for Christmas with a big red star on top of it. I had a blanket for my Christmas present...I like it very much. I aways sleep in it. When it is very cold, I would like to stay in my favourite blanket all morning.

REVIEW

FEMINIST : Japan, International Issue for Women East and West; Vol. 1, No. 4, February 1978. (Tokyo: Boku-shin-sha) $2.50

The fourth issue of this new journal (it first appeared in 1977) presents its first international edition by publishing in the English language. Although the magazine claims to have had an international perspective from its beginning, the first three Japanese- language issues have had limited readership outside Japan. Hereafter, the *Feminist* plans to dedicate one issue a year to the exchange of ideas and opinions of women world-wide.

The February issue is divided into two major sections: the first deals with the condition of women in Japan, and the second with women in other Asian countries. Under the heading: "What Keeps Japanese Women 'in Their Place'"?, seven different views on the state of women in Japan are provided. For example, the Japanese cult of motherhood is examined for its effects on relationships between men and women. The Japanese mother's self-sacrificial role is seen to induce life-long guilt feelings in her children, especially sons. Moreover, men come to demand that their women be not only servants but also mother-surrogates. The resulting distortions in man-woman relationships tend in turn, to reinforce the strong attachment of women to their children, creating a vicious circle.

Other articles explore: women in the labour force; family planning in Japan, the role of women in Japan's stupendous economic growth; and the ancient tradition of women

as intermediaries between the gods and the emperors. Such a wide-ranging approach, reflecting diverse disciplines, is rare in a journal of this sort, and is one of its most striking features.

Although the Japanese constitution proclaims the equality of women, there is no machinery to enforce the laws guaranteeing women's rights. The authors clearly describe several reasons for the traditional secondary position of Japanese women. However, they are unable to formulate any concrete suggestions for actual change. They observe, analyze, interpret and report, but sadly, they go no further.

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The second section, "Feminism in Asia", includes articles about the condition of women in South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma and the Phillipines. These articles offer less diversity than those on Japanese women. However, for this reviewer, they are more interesting because of their revelation of less familiar facts.

For instance, the essay about Malaysian women and the law discusses the numerous marriage and divorce practices that exist in Malaysia. In public life, women enjoy full legal rights: that is, they may vote, act as jurors, be elected, and have the right to education and property. However, the rights of women in marriage and divorce are considerably weaker. The complex systems of marriage and divorce result in different rights for women of various ethnic and religious groups. Polygamous marriages are sanctioned by both common law and statutory law. While the former need not be registered, they are valid for establishing succession and legitimacy of children.

Women in polygamous marriages in Malaysia are in a particularly vulnerable position, since a man can take as many wives as he wants-- and divorce them, almost at will. Muslim men, under statutory law, can marry four wives and divorce them simply by repudiating them three times. Polygamous common law marriages are found among the Chinese in Malaysia, and divorce may occur in two ways: by mutual consent, or by the *husband* repudiating the wife for such reasons as: being an invalid, talkativeness, disrespect for the husband's parents, or even the expression of jealousy.

Besides Muslim marriage, statutory law in Malaysia recognizes both civil marriage, which is monogamous and independent of religious or social customs, and Christian marriage, which is also generally monogamous. The definition of 'monogamy', however, is highly questionable, as a man is permitted to take a common law wife, but a woman, of course, is not allowed to have an additional husband. In the tangled web of prevailing marriage and divorce practices in Malaysia, it is clear that women's legal rights are usually superseded by religious and social conventions.

Other essays in *Feminist* deal with the relatively strong position enjoyed by the women of both Burma and the Phillipines. According to the authors, Burmese women enjoy full equality with men, largely because of the fact that the country never really went through a heavy feudal or colonization period. And, although Filipina women lost a certain degree of status during the colonial period, they never lost respect for their equal capability to the male. In contrast, Thai women and South Korean women are viewed as fairly "unliberated".

The tone of the articles in this issue of *Feminist* range from leftist activism to Christian idealism and hope. The periodical embraces a broad spectrum of styles and interpretations, but all authors write from a feminist perspective.

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In addition to the main features on Japanese women and Asian feminism, the journal includes a list of women's groups throughout Japan, an interview, book reviews, poetry and a group discussion. Most of the articles were written by Japanese women and appear in both Japanese and English, making this issue truly international in approach.

In terms of style, content and message, *Feminist* is a high calibre effort, intended to appeal particularly to educated women. The essays do not represent popular pieces of writing, and are notable for their sociological or anthropological approaches. Compared to a North American feminist magazine, such as *MS.*, the quality of the writing, thematic structure and organization in *Feminist: Japan* are clearly of a superior level.

All the articles are highly journalistic and avoid dwelling on personal experience and opinion. At the same time, they are quite optimistic, promulgating hope and the solidarity of women for the future. Unfortunately, the changes may be a lot longer in coming and much less- encompassing than those promoted in the magazine. Knowing, wanting, and accomplishing are entirely separate functions, and *Feminist* presents only the first two.

- DIANE YIP

Diane Yip has a masters degree in Environmental Studies from York University and has specialized in the areas of group dynamics, counselling, women's studies and community development.

LETTERS

MY JAPANESENESS

Dear Editor:

A couple of months ago I was invited to join *The Asianadian* and write a feature article for the Women's Issue. Although, I wish you success with your magazine, I feel that I cannot commit myself to working in your collective because of what I consider to be a presently bitter, Yellow Power tone. Racism is of course one of the greatest evils in the world, but we must also acknowledge the equal horror of the victim's possible reactions. By encouraging feelings of anger one runs the risk of setting off a volatile rash of vindictive behaviour.

I would like to cite a horror story from my childhood to illustrate my point. I was once brutally beaten up by a group of white children for being a "chink". I later discovered myself confronted with one of my attackers--alone. I got my revenge by beating the hell out of her. I felt victorious, for it was a one to one equal confrontation. In retrospect, I am terrified by the fact that I could possibly become so violent--that personal embitterment could arouse the desire to kill another human being.

I haven't yet outgrown the racism bogeyman of revenge. Last year a friend used the word "Jap" in my presence. At the time I sat unperturbed, but the next day I flew at her. Using very biting language, I confronted her with the reality of her bigotry. She apologized profusely, since she had never even heard me raise my voice before. Although she has never uttered again the word "Jap", I still can't help treating her coldly. Deep down in my heart, I suppose I find satisfaction in seeking vengeance but morally, I vehemently condemn my childish actions.

Racism is my most dangerous enemy, but for a rather perverse reason-- because it brings out the worst in me. I admire individuals who can handle encounters with bigots with more intelligence and magnaminity. I am still struggling between an old virtue of forgiveness and a new virtue of assertiveness (in place of vindictiveness).

Recently in a conversation with a Ukrainian Canadian friend, I found myself trying to explain my "cultural identity." I stated that my culture is written in my eyes, bone structure and skin. It is something immediately visible. My friend remarked that this visibility would probably make it easier for me to retain a cultural identification with my Asian ancestors. She said that it was different for the Ukrainians. If they lost their language or customs through neglect, they would in fact begin to lose their identity as Ukrainians and blend in with the white Anglo-Saxon mainstream.

The physical manifestation of my race of course connects me to an Asian culture; however, I would like to think that my Japaneseness goes far deeper than my skin. I need not wear the costumes or speak the language of my ancestral origin in order to retain my culture, i.e., to retain the past. It is and always will be a part of me. It is ingrained not only in my style of social interaction and ways of perceiving the world, but more importantly, in the nuclei of my cells-- and in my soul. Even if I had a *hakujin* name I could never feel anything but Japanese. It is something of which I am proud. My Japaneseness is what makes me distinctive, if only for myself.

J.M.
Toronto, Ontario.

RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Dear Editor:

From your first issue, *The Asianadian* appears to be quite a handsome product. Having lived my last two years in between newspaper deadlines, I can well appreciate the hard work that has gone into the production of your magazine.

Before coming to Canada I used to glimpse occasionally at various ethnic publications originating in the U.S. I must admit that I found it difficult to get excited about them, although most of them were obviously published by people who knew what they were doing. The problem was that they

LETTERS

were too professional and artistic for the purpose they were meant to serve.

I don't question the aesthetic or pragmatic value of art magazines, the pragmatic side being that they often serve as starting ground for writers who need a break. But the free rein that an arts magazine gives to experimenting writers usually makes them less than ideal vehicles of communication. It results in narrow confines being placed on the size and quality of the readership. Eventually most of the subscribers will be other writers or academics, and the average reader, who is no illiterate, shrinks away from the magazine in confusion.

As long as there are writers there will be the need for arts magazines. The difficulty arises when an ethnic magazine carries the imprint of an arts magazine. When a magazine written for Chinese readers is published in English, it automatically excludes from its readership those Chinese who have little or no facility with the language. Even among university educated Chinese who have gone through a system in which English was the language of instruction, the motivation to pick up extra-curricular reading is not high. (I base this assertion on my years among Chinese students at Washington State, who I presume are typical Chinese students at any North American university). Arthur Hailey, maybe. *Time*, sometimes. *Penthouse* definitely.

Such a restriction on an ethnic magazine is a pity, because the ones who suffer most from culture shock are those with minimal education and little knowledge of English. The language problems exclude them from more desirable careers, impede their understanding of North American culture--and make them easy targets for ridicule. For a stranger in a foreign land to understand the bigotry which he encounters he must be able to articulate his frustrations, both to himself and others. But the much needed services of the ethnic publication forever elude him because it is a language he does not comprehend.

An ethnic magazine will continue to place itself out of the reach of more and more readers as it grows in sophistication and complexity of language and content. Whether intended or not, the invisible class line is distinctly drawn. The concerned writer's shrill cries of racial consciousness are heard only by those like him who already understand the problems. Those who need consciousness raising most are condemned to a life of Charlie's Angels, and a vision of the white Anglo-Saxon world through the tainted lenses of *Playboy* magazine.

From the diversity of material in *The Asianadian*, as well as from your expressed intention to refrain from becoming too scholarly, it appears that your collective is already aware of the potential difficulties. Although formidable, they may not be insurmountable. I would be interested to see how you plan to overcome them. In fact, I believe that if you form clear, definite goals for *The Asianadian*, your financial and readership woes will diminish, if not disappear.

Jesse Wong
Night News Editor
Winnipeg Free Press
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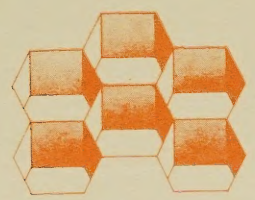

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